

## BOOK REVIEW

BEETLES, by Ewald Reitter. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 205 pp., cloth, \$20.00. This book shows once and for all that photographs of beetles can be as beautiful as those of butterflies and moths. The 60 magnificent full-color plates are in perfect focus and are a truly artistic achievement. Unfortunately, however, after the initial pleasure of seeing some of the more spectacular beetles in all their natural grandeur, most Coleopterists will feel increasingly disappointed as they examine the book further. In spite of the great appeal of this type of book to the potential student of beetles, certain aspects cannot pass without criticism.

Besides a rather poor job of editing the translation, the textual treatment, while entertaining, is rather shallow, even for the non-entomologist. The sections on anatomy, physiology, and metamorphosis are adequate, but the drawings of a generalized cicindelid beetle are poor. Sutures are indicated where none exist and are lacking in places where they naturally occur (such as those separating the mesosternum from the metasternum and the latter from the abdomen). Following a brief discussion of nomenclature and classification (in which the law of priority is not explained) is an interesting but sketchy section on zoogeography and ecology. Included are the cave, parasitic, symbiotic, and aquatic habitats. Size range is also treated, including an enlightening section entitled "A systematic review of large beetles." Sexual dimorphism and dichromism are treated briefly, followed by 11 pages of "beetle friends and foes."

The concluding pages deal with beetles in mythology, folk-lore, and the law. This is perhaps the most original and entertaining feature of the book aside from the photographs, where, in spite of their superb quality, a few simple additions might have increased their usefulness. For instance, the plates could have been numbered and perhaps referred to in the text. The beetles are not arranged according to family sequences in many cases. Although over 300 species are illustrated, only 29 beetle families are represented; of the 60 plates, 18 are devoted exclusively to scarabs and 17 to cerambycids. Compare this to Austin's *Birds of the World* in which over 700 species, including at least one species of each family and most sub-families, are illustrated.

In an appendix following the plates, a brief history of beetle study is given, including a list of specialists in each group. It is unfortunate that the latter has not been brought up to date. At least the list could have been accurate. Of the "more important workers in each group," R. H. Arnett is listed under Cucujidae, a family in which he has never worked, while Fall, Casey, etc., are not mentioned at all. A few European serial publications on insects are listed followed by a discussion of some of the more important beetle collections. Finally, details of making and maintaining a beetle collection are provided for the benefit of beginners.

Inaccuracies such as those mentioned above make the value and usefulness of the book as a whole subject to serious question.—E. R. Van Tassell, Catholic University, Washington, D. C.

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NOTICE

All of the fascicles of *The Beetles of the United States* by R. H. Arnett, Jr., are now in the hands of the printer. Any corrections and addenda that need to be made should be called to the attention of the author as the parts are issued so that these may be added to the corrigenda to be published with the general index.

The author wishes again to acknowledge the tremendous help he has received from the Coleopterists of this country and abroad in preparing this manual. It is greatly appreciated.

It is anticipated that the entire book will be published before the end of 1962. Bound copies will be available at that time.